

In Defense of England

A Review by ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD.

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY, 1783-1919. Edited by A. W. Ward and G. P. Gooch. The Macmillan Company.

THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND WORLD PEACE. By Newton W. Rowell. Oxford University Press.

To understand either of these studies in British history, that is, to understand why they were written, it is necessary to recall a few facts with which the first does not deal at all and the second only by implication. When the British and Scottish crowns were united (1603) Great Britain covered an area of 88,000 square miles and contained a total population of less than 7,000,000. To-day the Britannic Commonwealth covers one-fourth of the earth's surface and contains one-fourth of the world's population. In other words, one man out of every four lives, sleeps and draws his pay under the British flag. So much for the land. On the sea the progress has been even more marvelous. On June 30, 1914, no fewer than 36 per cent. of the world's trade was conducted by the United Kingdom, while 42 per cent. of the world's steam shipping was under her control.

Now let us look back a little. Frederick the Great died in 1786. He was already bilious in 1785. During the latter year he made a survey of Europe. He found things in a desperate condition: France, Spain, Austria and Russia were in alliance, the balance of power was gone, England and Prussia were isolated. Old Fritz doubted whether England could ever again get on her feet, nor was he at all hilarious about the outlook of his own Prussia. And he knew a great deal; he was certainly the one man in Continental Europe who at that time would have been accredited with knowing what he was talking about. But, informed though he was, he proved a poor prophet. The "alliance" he dreaded never amounted to much, the "mass" he saw ready to overrun both Prussia and England never put in its appearance, or if it did it retreated in due time, leaving a Prussia dynamically able to lift its head, and an England that has gone forth and on.

As a result of this prosperity the British Empire is not loved. It should not be that way, but it is; human nature is immutable. Enemies of England, particularly professors in Germany, have adopted a set formula: War breaks out, the British are naturally concerned, for they cover one-fourth of the earth, and when the war is over they have somehow widened the girth of their kingdom. Statistics are then given to show that with each succeeding skirmish the Union Jack is hoisted over some new parapet, people or principality. Owing to this, England may be envied and studied but she is not loved. In the subway of our own metropolis an enterprising merchant has advertised "English jarmalades and jellies." A wag, or a vandal, has erased the "English" and inserted an unprintable but vigorous word above it. The case is typical. Let us repeat, England is not loved. She has made too much to be honest, "the peoples" think.

Aware of this, and of course for other reasons that are infinitely more ideal, the best historians the United Kingdom could command have begun this great history of British foreign policy (there are to be two more volumes) in an effort to offset the slander, scotch the abuse and correct the false impressions associated with the English people as empire-builders and colonizers. Or, in their own words, in a preface manifestly written with a measure of feeling, they have had "an avowed regard for the interests, and above all for the honor, of Great Britain." That the work is written in a style that does not savor of typewriter rapidity or attempts at smart brilliancy and that it is of classical solidity in content may be assumed. That this first volume contains notes, an admirable index, a rich bibliography for each chapter, an introduction of 140 pages and quotations where these are called for may also be assumed by any one at all familiar with these "Cambridge" histories.

But it must not be inferred that the various scholars responsible for this volume of 628 large pages have gone at their work unmindful of their reputations as historians or indifferent to their standing as English gentlemen. They have investigated each outstanding case of English foreign policy from the close of the Revo-

lutionary war to the belated negotiations that enabled men to say that the war of 1812 was over with one constant and unmodified objective: to show how England's Foreign Office was managed. If, in their judgment, and as determined by the notes, communiques and other documents bearing on the cases in question—which are here published, many of them for the first time—they have found that England was remiss or selfish or misguided or in any way at fault, they have not hesitated to say so in writing. At the same time they are not afraid to print documents which

two countries! But the wars have never been declared.

The keynote of Rowell's volume is found on page 152: "The greatest force making for stability and security throughout the world is the Britannic Commonwealth." Mr. Rowell emphasizes the vast difference between the British Empire and the Roman Imperium, contends that impartial historians will come to rank Woodrow Wilson "as among the greatest Americans," gives evidence to prove that civilization cannot survive without some kind of a League of Nations, pays a glowing tribute to the missionaries of the church, makes Sir Oliver Lodge say that there is enough intra-atomic energy in a mass of matter the size of a man's fist to lift the German fleet from the bottom of the sea and put

stances, were essential to the making of a holder of this office.

The opening chapter of the book is devoted to a historical sketch of the office of Prime Minister and the final one to an analysis of the Prime Ministers and their general qualities. The individual sketches are temperate in tone, their matter of factness being relieved by occasional touches of a dry humor quite apart from the occasional anecdote introduced. In fact, the author has been so reserved in his sketches that the reader will not feel in the slightest degree the heated controversies of which so many of these men were the storm centers nor the strong and passionate friendships and enmities they evoked. To read the sketch here of the younger Pitt, for example, is to realize what dryness can mean if one has chanced to read Sir Julian Corbett's enthusiasms over "Pitt's system" in the Seven Years' War. And this same effect is to be noted in the sketches of Lord John Russell and of David Lloyd George.

One of the most impressive features of the lives of many of the subjects of these sketches is the amazing number of years they held public office. With us a Joe Cannon is a rarity. But here we have Robert Walpole being Prime Minister for twenty-one years; of Newcastle holding high political office for forty-six years; of Portland being twice Prime Minister, an interval of twenty-four years separating his filling of this office; and the elder Pitt's forty-three years of political life, during which he was twice Prime Minister. His son was Prime Minister three times, beginning his career in public office as Chancellor of the Exchequer at twenty-three years of age. It was not until the Earl of Derby succeeded to the office that the younger Pitt's record was equaled, but Gladstone surpassed both men by holding the office four times. Palmerston has the record for holding public office with forty-seven years. Prime Ministers are subject to one common infliction, it is to be noted, for Lady Montfort once said, "All Prime Ministers have the gout."



Photo from Wide World Photos.

Rudyard Kipling and King George V. visiting the French battlefields.

show that Benjamin Franklin was occasionally ill informed and inclined by temperament to draw unfounded conclusions. As to the Treaty of Ghent, on the other hand, they berate and deride England for selecting a body of inferior men to act at the peace conference when the United States had sent such brilliant and able representatives (the adjectives are theirs) as J. Q. Adams, Henry Clay, Albert Gallatin et al. And as if by a pre-determined plan they close with a reference to the fact that no sooner had the war of 1812 been brought to a peaceful termination than the hotheads exclaimed: That treaty? Why, it is inoculated with the germs of future wars between the

It on a Scottish mountain, and assures us that Hugo Grotius was the father of international law. In other words, his is a book of a totally different stamp and caliber from the Cambridge history. It is addressed primarily to the Canadians. They must win, however, a little to have Mr. Rowell tell them that the world war was worth all it cost Canada because it taught her the dangers of materialism and militarism, the impossibility of national isolation and the virtues of international cooperation. These are solemn truths; but there is reason to believe that the Canadians were already familiar with them before Ottawa had planned to send a single man overseas.

England's Prime Ministers

THE PRIME MINISTERS OF GREAT BRITAIN: 1721-1921. By the Hon. Clive Bigham, C.M.G. E. P. Dutton & Co.

SINCE Robert Walpole became the first Prime Minister of Great Britain in 1721 thirty-five men have followed him in that office. And although every one of them has had one or more biographers—with the exception of Lord Goderich—no single work has ever appeared before this one by the Hon. Clive

Bigham solely devoted to that office and its occupants. Thus this book will prove a great convenience to the general reader of British political history and to what James Huneker once called "fact hounds," for it is singularly rich in those things and is therefore an excellent book of reference. Moreover it is illustrated with portraits of each of the thirty-six Prime Ministers, many of these being reproductions of the work of famous portrait painters, the pictorial element creating the impression that good looks, save in a few in-

Northward Ho!

THE NORTHWARD COURSE OF EMPIRE. By Vilhjalmur Stefansson. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

IN writing this volume, several chapters of which have appeared in the *World's Work* and the *National Geographic Magazine*, Mr. Stefansson has had two purposes in mind. One was an endeavor to do the utmost to disprove the generally held idea that the far North of our continent was unsuitable for habitation, the second to add his weight to the contention that the centers of civilization move northward, and to raise the slogan, northward the course of empire takes its way. The first of these ideas came to him after reading an essay by Samuel McChord Crothers on the advisability of founding a "university of un-learning," the second as a result of his years of study of man's progress over the world.

As a teacher in the university of un-learning Mr. Stefansson has felt it incumbent upon him to remove the popular impression as to climatic and living conditions in the far North, to the extent of his powers, through the presentation of facts about Alaska and the ultimate verge of the Dominion of Canada. Lest any one should hold him as a prejudiced witness, owing to his many years of life in the Arctic wilderness, he has gathered his testimony from official publications of the United States and Canadian Governments and from men he has known as long residents of the country under the Arctic Circle. The excellent case he has made was recognized on the original publication of the text of this work in magazine form and attracted an extraordinary amount of attention that has not yet been forgotten.

Since man has always progressed northward, Mr. Stefansson foresees him continuing this course until the Alaskan, Siberian and northern Canadian lands will solve the problems of where an already crowded world is to go for a living place. Of course he realizes that man will have to change his prevailing habit of flocking into the cities and towns before the far North will come into its own as a place of residence. But meanwhile it is waiting to be put to that use, a generally agreeable paradise barring its mosquitoes, sand flies and horse flies and its torrid summers.